

# ThunderEnlightening<sup>T.M.</sup>

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc.



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CLASSIC THUNDERBIRD OWNER AND RESTORER

ISSUE NUMBER NINETEEN • NOVEMBER 2006

## PARTS REPRODUCTION

Thirty. That is the number of new items CASCO has brought to the TBird hobby in just the last year. As soon as we think we have made everything people will need to enjoy their TBird, we have a customer request something new or something different. It never seems to end. Thank you all for your suggestions over this and the last 37 years. Your suggestions keep us busy and make owning TBirds more enjoyable.

Our ear is always to the ground: Recently, someone mentioned in the Classic T-Bird online group that he needed the small tab that mounts on the top of the headlamp bucket and retains the top of the headlamp door. This is a small part that is not often needed and wasn't available. So CASCO produced it - part #13008T for \$9.95. It will be years before tooling costs will be recovered. We believe what is good for the TBird hobby is good for CASCO, even if the payoff for CASCO is years down the road. We welcome any suggestions you may have. Whether it's a new part or an enhancement to an existing part, CASCO is listening and willing to give your suggestion serious consideration.

## A MESSAGE FROM OUR RETIRING CO-FOUNDER, SUE BROWN

I would like to take this opportunity to say "Farewell" and thank all of our customers over the past thirty some years for your business and the wonderful friendships I have developed.

I have joined Bill in retirement instead of answering the phone, processing orders, and whatever else the business required to keep running smoothly. It has been fun most of the time – a little frustrating at times – but what job isn't? I miss the daily routine but I also know Amie, Betsy, Bob, Don, Jim and Nancy are very capable and will always give you the good CASCO service you have come to expect and deserve.

Happy T-Birding – see you at the next CTCl convention!  
Sue Brown, aka "The Thunderbroad"

## SHIFTER BOOT INSTALLATION

You can extend the life of your standard shift shifter boot by putting several wraps of tape around the chrome shifter arm before you install the boot. This will hold the top of the boot up such that the "bellows" are extended.

The problem that tends to occur is when the boot is collapsed it can be pinched between the shifter arm and the shifter housing. By extending the boot this tendency is minimized.

## WINTER PROJECT SPECIAL

Brake lines usually rust from the inside out. If your T-Bird has its original brake lines, a smart winter project would be to replace them with new. We will help by making our Brake Line Kits an even better bargain. These special prices are good through the end of 2006.

This kit contains all seven of the custom formed steel brake lines needed for your T-Bird. Lines are pre-bent like original with steel and/or spring and/or braided protectors with double flares on all ends.

### STEEL BRAKE LINES

<b>BLK5P</b>	Steel Brake Lines-55-With Power Brakes	\$95.65
<b>BLK5S</b>	Steel Brake Lines-55-With Std. Brakes	\$99.65
<b>BLK6P</b>	Steel Brake Lines-56-With Power Brakes	\$95.65
<b>BLK6S</b>	Steel Brake Lines-56-With Std. Brakes	\$99.65
<b>BLK7P</b>	Steel Brake Lines-57-With Power Brakes	\$99.20
<b>BLK7S</b>	Steel Brake Lines-57-With Std. Brakes	\$99.65

### STAINLESS STEEL BRAKE LINES

Same kit as above but made with 304 stainless steel tubing.

<b>BLK5PS</b>	Stnls. Brake Lines-55-With Power Brakes	\$161.30
<b>BLK5SS</b>	Stnls. Brake Lines-55-With Std. Brakes	\$167.30
<b>BLK6PS</b>	Stnls. Brake Lines-56-With Power Brakes	\$161.30
<b>BLK6SS</b>	Stnls. Brake Lines-56-With Std. Brakes	\$167.30
<b>BLK7PS</b>	Stnls. Brake Lines-57-With Power Brakes	\$165.90
<b>BLK7SS</b>	Stnls. Brake Lines-57-With Std. Brakes	\$167.30

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### **Why do I need to change my distributor to use the more modern '57 style carb?**

The reason the original '56 distributor won't work is because the vacuum signal from the '57 style carb is too high. A result of using a '56 style distributor with a '57 style carb would be that your timing would be advanced all of the time.

Now if some one could come up with a "black box" that reduced the vacuum signal or a vacuum advance module that bolted onto a '56 distributor that was expecting a larger vacuum signal, then we would have some more options. But to our knowledge no practical such device exists.

Some owners assume that you could just use electronic ignition. Electronic points won't do anything to help the situation since the electronic points do not have any provision for advancing the timing. That is, we still need some way, centrifugal or vacuum, to control the timing.

*Jim Brown, President CASCO*

### **I just got my Bird out of storage and it doesn't run right and the compression is low. What's wrong?**

You might have some surface rust on the cylinder walls or perhaps have some rust on the valve seating areas. It may or might not go away after driving a little.

We suggest that you change the oil and take your car for a fifty mile ride and then check the compression once again.

It doesn't make any difference if the engine is hot or cold. If the compression is still low you can determine if you have bad rings or bad valves by removing the rocker arms and pressurizing the cylinders with about 100 psi of air thru the spark plug holes. Many auto parts store will have the adaptor as part of a compression tester kit for less than twenty bucks.

Turn the engine until the cylinder being checked will hold pressure. If there is lots of air or noise through the carburetor, then the intake valve is leaking, if there is lots of air or noise out the tail pipe, the exhaust valves are leaking. If there is a lot of air coming out of the crankcase, then the piston rings are shot. You can get a feel as to how much air leakage is normal by using a good cylinder as a base line.

Be careful, the engine will quickly turn a little when the air pressure is applied. Stay clear of the belts and other things that might grab your fingers.

*Bill Brown, CASCO Founder*

### **Tips for stowing your convertible top**

First of all follow the owner's manual instructions about putting the top up and down in the same order as they describe. Under the "Lowering the Top" instructions, it says "Release the side clamps first. The side clamps must be released first to prevent tearing the top fabric when you lower the top." They also say later on "be sure that the fabric isn't pinched in the linkage when top is folded."

If you have a clearance problem check on where it occurs. The seat needs to be all the way forward when you raise or lower the soft top. I had a hard time with ours, and found out that it was binding up on the windlace along the back side of the doors. To get around this, I took a couple of pieces of lightweight, thin cardboard like you would find in a carton of

paper or something similar. I took it to Kinko's, or one of those stores that does laminating, and had them laminate it without trimming the excess when they were done. I keep these in the trunk, and when I raise or lower the soft top, I slip these between the windlace and the top so the windlace doesn't get pulled out of shape. So far, they have worked really well.

*Don Miller, Springfield, OR*

To store the soft top behind the seat in such a way that the vinyl window doesn't end up with a pucker at the two points where the handles that hold the top down on the deck, come into contact UNZIP the window and let it lay/hang flat behind the folded top. I unzip mine and then lay a beach towel on each side of the plastic window to ensure it doesn't rub on anything. Easy to do, no puckers as it is flat and hangs freely not crimped or folded over....and no scuff marks from the plastic rubbing against each other. Works like a charm but easier to do with two people.

*Bill Wells, Bloomfield Hills, MI*

## ADJUSTING YOUR NEUTRAL SAFETY SWITCH

Your neutral switch is located under the car just below the shift lever. When you get down there, looking towards the front of the car, you will find it adjacent to (on the right of) the LH muffler. The hand brake cable runs through that area as well. The neutral switch is a sealed unit and does not require cleaning, but may occasionally need to be adjusted. If you are having trouble starting the car in neutral, then adjustment is required. There are two 5/16" hex head screws holding the switch to the mounting bracket. The holes where the switch is mounted are elongated so that the switch can move fore and aft to make adjustments. When making these adjustments, it is best to have a helper in the car while you are making adjustments below, but if you go it alone it is trial and error until the switch is in position to start the car when in neutral.

To make adjustments start by disconnecting the coil so the engine will not start, place the gear shift in neutral, then loosen the two screws until the switch can move fore and aft on the mounting bracket, but not too loose because you want the switch to stay in position until you can tighten the screws. Have your helper turn the ignition key to the start position while you carefully move the switch until the engine cranks, then tighten the screws to hold the switch in position. Move the gear shift in and out of neutral several times while cranking the engine. If it cranks each time it is in the neutral position, you have a good adjustment.

*Ed Kelly, Reading, MA*

*We are sending our thanks and a \$30 gift certificate to our TE contributors: Ed Kelly, Don Miller, Bill Wells & John Draxler*

## VACUUM WIPER MOTOR REPAIR

If you are experiencing problems of slow wiper action, incomplete travel or improper shut down of the vacuum wipers on your Thunderbird the problem is probably the vacuum wiper motor.

These motors are quite simple and rely on a certain amount of grease for sealing the inner workings. Over the years this grease dries out and gets stiff thereby slowing down the motion and in many cases making them so stiff they will hardly operate. All this can be solved by cleaning the parts inside and applying new grease and sealing the unit back up.

To do this you must remove the unit from the car. To accomplish this you should follow the instructions in the shop manual (or fly by the seat of your pants if you have the experience).

Once the unit is out, wash it off with some good solvent or preferably some spray brake or carb cleaner. Cleanliness is very important throughout this whole operation. Lay down some clean toweling to work on.

The screws used on this unit are of an elliptical type and I don't know who supplies a tool for them so you will have to make do with a small needle nose pliers and maybe a small regular pliers.

- 1) Remove the screws holding the cover on the switching mechanism located on top of the unit and remove the unit with all pieces. Lay them aside.
- 2) Remove the two screws holding the cover on the front of the motor. Inside you will find a spring-loaded cam that switches the direction of the motor. Remove the plastic cam and then the spring and plate assy. Lay them all aside.
- 3) Now remove the screws holding the top cover on the housing. When you are ready to remove the last screw hold the unit together as you remove it. After removing the last screw carefully remove the cover watching that you do not lose any pieces of the gasket. You will also see that there is gasket material located in the small wells (recessed areas) where the ends of the shafts lay. Remove all gasket pieces and carefully save them. When you reassemble this you will have to use all of the old gasket pieces over again. Remove the shaft and flap assy. Now - wipe all the grease off of everything and wash every piece very carefully using some of the carb or brake cleaner.
- 4) Before reassembling, liberally coat the complete inside of the housing and the top cover with silicone grease including all gasket surfaces. Also coat the flap and shaft assy.
- 5) Install the gasket pieces in the shaft wells and seat the shaft and flap assy. in the housing.
- 6) Stick all the rest of the gasket pieces on the proper place on the housing case making sure that they are all there. There must be a total seal to the cover.
- 7) Install the cover and screw it tight.
- 8) Install the spring and plate into the area on the front of

the housing hooking it on the tiny pin. Coat the small area at the top where the plastic cam sets with some silicone grease and also coat the plastic cam and install it. Before installing the cover on the front, check the action of the cam by holding it lightly in place while rotating the motor shaft through its entire cycle. The small plastic cam should snap back and forth as the motor shaft nears each end of travel. If all is satisfactory, install the cover and screw it tight.

9) Apply graphite lube to the rubber block in, and the plastic slide for the top switching mechanism and also to the flat metal spring and install these items screwing the hold down cover on.

10) You can now test the unit before installing it up under the dash by hooking a vacuum hose to it from the engine and with the engine running, switch the unit on and it should oscillate from one direction to the other.

Watch when you shut it off by the switch on the unit that it travels all the way to one end of the stroke before quitting. This will ensure that it will "park" the wipers properly before shutting off.

Congratulations! You can now install it back in the car. You should also replace the hose to the unit at this time. You should have some nice smooth operating wipers. It would be a good idea to replace the wiper blades now so you can rest assured that this part of your car is completely taken care of for awhile.

*John R. Draxler, Thunderbird Ranch, [www.tbirdranch.com](http://www.tbirdranch.com)*

## INSTALLING THE SOFT TOP TACK STRIP RETAINER

Now that winter is fast approaching its time once again for tackling those projects that were discovered during the season of enjoyment.

Here at the Restorations department we have been receiving quite a few calls from Thunderbird owners about the new Tack Strip Retainers, part # 50001B. Some owners have already purchased and installed this kit and CASCO has received numerous calls about this new item regarding proper installation. The center tack strip retainer has also been addressed with numerous calls that it will not stay down after installation.

To install this part is relatively painless. This repair can be done on or off the Thunderbird depending on your confidence level and taking great care not to scratch your deck. Once you have removed your soft top for replacement and found out that the retainer has since rusted away, now you need to replace this particular part. First order of business would be to remove the rear tack strip or what is left of it. Now you want to drill out the rivets through the old tack strip retainer and remove. This can be done, as I said, on or off the Thunderbird. To reinstall the new tack strip retainer you will need to have the frame set back on your car and latched. The retainer acts in two parts, reinforcement for the deck frame and of course a retainer for the tack strip. With the frame installed hold your sections along the frame to match the curvature of the frame, the retainers are

aluminum and can be manipulated to fit if needed. Once you are satisfied that the fit is correct, you will now anchor this retainer utilizing the 1/8" X 3/8" rivets. Once you have anchored the retainer along your soft top frame you are now ready to install the tack strip. Installing the tack strip using the same procedure except this time you will use 1/8" X 3/4" rivets.

To anchor the center tack strip we recommend a 2-part epoxy which can be purchased at your local hardware store. You will want to run a bead of this along the inside of the bow and then install the tack strip pressing it in with vise clamps to insure the tack strip is seated to the bottom of the bow. Allow for sufficient drying time, now you are ready to complete your soft top replacement.

For any other tips or help please call us @ (740)622-9700 we will be more than happy to assist you on any questions that you may have. From all of us here in the Restoration Department Happy T-Birding and have a safe and happy holidays.

John Lonsberry, Manager, Restoration Department  
Division of Classic Auto Inc.

**HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM  
ALL THE GANG AT CASCO**

*Nancy Glenn Annie Robert Shawn  
Shawn Joe Brad Betsy  
Brii Sue Don Susan Mike John*

**ThunderEnlightening™**

Classic Auto Supply Co., Inc. *Thunderbird Specialists*  
**CASCO**  
SINCE 1988

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795 High Street, Coshocton, Ohio 43812

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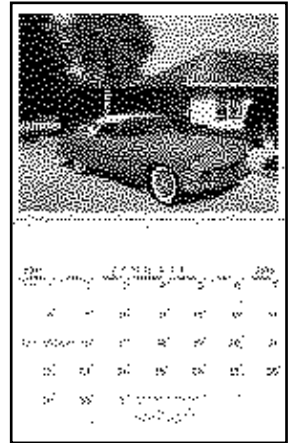
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**2007 CLASSIC T-BIRD CALENDAR**

Our 2006 calendar was so popular that we decided to do it again this year. We have improved the quality by having it printed on heavier stock this time. The calendar is a Classic Thunderbird full color calendar featuring ONLY 1955, 1956, & 1957 Thunderbirds. Photos of cars belonging to our customers and photos from our collection are featured in this 12-month memo style wall calendar.



This calendar was designed by and is available from Classic Auto Supply Co. (CASCO) for \$14.00, postage included. Order your calendar now by calling CASCO toll-free at **800-374-0914** or visit our web site at **www.classictbird.com**.

**HOLIDAY SPECIAL FROM CASCO**

**SPECIAL SAVINGS ON SHIPPING** on all orders shipped from December 1 to December 31, 2006. During that time CASCO will charge a *maximum* shipping & handling of **\$14.95** for all shipments made by standard UPS surface within the continental United States.

This special excludes any items that are normally billed at actual shipping costs.

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